

REPORT OF THE BOARD.

Synopsis of the Findings as Submitted to Congress.

WASHINGTON, March 28.—Following is the report of the Court of Inquiry in part: "Key West, Fla., March 21, 1898.—After a full and mature consideration of all the testimony before it, the court finds as follows:

Position of the Ship.

1. That the United States battleship "Maine" arrived in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, on the 21st day of January, 1898, and was taken to buoy No. 4, in from five and a half to six fathoms of water, by the regular government pilot. The United States consul general at Havana had notified the authorities at that place, the previous evening, of the intended arrival of the "Maine."

Excellent Discipline.

2. The state of discipline on board the "Maine" was excellent, and all orders and regulations in regard to the care and safety of the ship were strictly carried out. All ammunition was stowed away in accordance with instructions, and proper care was taken whenever ammunition was handled. Nothing was stored in any magazines or shell rooms which was not permitted to be stored there. The magazines and shell rooms were always locked after having been opened, and after the destruction of the "Maine" the keys were found in their proper place, in the captain's cabin, everything having been reported secure that evening at 8 p. m.

Temperature Correct.

The temperature of the magazines and shell rooms were taken daily and reported. The only magazine which had an undue amount of heat was the after ten-inch magazine, and that did not explode at the time the "Maine" was destroyed. The report then gives the disposition of the various dangerous explosives, showing that they could not have been responsible for the affair; says the coal bunkers, four of which were empty, had been carefully inspected, and adding: "The fire alarms in the bunkers were in working order and there had never been a case of spontaneous combustion of coal on board the "Maine."

Low Pressure of Steam.

The two after boilers of the ship were in use at the time of the disaster, but for auxiliary purposes only, with a comparatively low pressure of steam, and being tended by a reliable watch. These boilers could not have caused the explosion of the ship. The forward boilers have since been found by the divers and are in a fair condition.

Details are Given.

The report then gives details of the explosions, as shown by the testimony, the first of which lifted the "Maine" in a marked degree, and says: "The first explosion was more in the nature of a report, like that of a gun, while the second explosion was more open, prolonged and of greater volume. This second explosion was, in the opinion of the court, caused by the partial explosion of two or more of the forward magazines of the "Maine."

Report of the Divers.

The balance of the report gives the conditions of the wreck as reported by the divers, which is taken to prove an outside explosion, which with the conclusions of the court in that regard, are quoted by the president in his message. The report is signed by Captain Sampson, president; Commander Marix, judge advocate, and approved by Admiral Sigsbee.

WASHINGTON, March 23.—Commander Horace Elmers has been detached from Cramp's navy yard and ordered to the command of the "Mosquito fleet," to be formed of all crafts that can carry a gun.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Accompanying the Report of the Board of Inquiry.

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 28.—The President today sent the following message to Congress:

To the Congress of the United States:

For some time prior to the visit of the "Maine" to Havana harbor, our consular representatives pointed out the advantages to follow the visit of national ships to Cuban waters, in accustoming people to presence of our flag as a symbol of good will and our ships in fulfillment of a mission of protection to American interests, even though no immediate need therefor might exist.

Mission of the "Maine."

Accordingly on 25th of January, last, after a conference with the Spanish minister, in which the renewal of visits of our war vessels to Spanish waters was discussed and accepted, the peninsular authorities at Madrid and Havana were advised of the purpose of this government to resume friendly naval visits to Cuban ports, and that in this view, the "Maine" would forthwith call at the port of Havana. This announcement was received by the Spanish government with an appreciation of the friendly character of the visit of the "Maine" and a notification of the intention to return the courtesy by sending Spanish ships to the principal ports of the United States. Meanwhile, the "Maine" entered the port of Havana on the 25th of January, her arrival being marked with no special incident besides the exchange of customary salutes and ceremonial visits.

Confidence Restored.

The "Maine" continued in the harbor of Havana during the three weeks following her arrival. No appreciable excitement attended her stay. On the contrary, a feeling of relief and confidence followed the resumption of a long interrupted friendly intercourse. So noticeable was this immediate effect of her visit, that the Consul General strongly urged the presence of our ship in Cuban waters should be kept up by retaining her at Havana, or in the event of her recall, by sending another vessel there to take her place.

Prompt Assistance Rendered.

At forty minutes past nine on the evening of the 15th of February the "Maine" was destroyed by an explosion, by which the entire forward part of the ship was utterly wrecked. In this catastrophe two officers and 260 of her crew perished, those who were not killed outright by the explosion being perished between decks by the tangle of wreckage and drowned by the immediate sinking of the hull. Prompt assistance was rendered by neighboring vessels anchored in the harbor, aid being especially given by boats of the Spanish cruiser "Alfonso XII" and the Ward line steamer, "City of Washington," which lay not far distant. The wounded were generously cared for by the authorities of Havana, the hospitals being freely opened to them, while the earliest recovered bodies of the dead were interred by the municipality in a public cemetery in the city. Tributes of grief and sympathy were offered from all official quarters of the island.

The People's Forbearance.

The appalling calamity fell upon the people of our country with crushing force, and for a brief time an intense excitement prevailed, which in a community less just and self-controlled than ours, must have led to hasty acts of blind resentment. This spirit, however, soon gave way to the calmer processes of reason, and to resolve to investigate the facts and await material proof before forming a judgment as to the cause, the responsibility, and if facts warranted, the remedy due. This course necessarily recommended itself from the outset to the executive, for

only in the light of dispassionately ascertained certainty could it determine the nature and measure of its full duty in the matter.

Took the Usual Procedure.

The usual procedure was followed, as in all cases of casualty or disaster to national vessels of any maritime state. A naval Court of Inquiry was at once organized, composed of officers well qualified by rank and practical experience to discharge onerous duty imposed upon them. And by a strong force of wreckers and divers the court proceeded to make a thorough investigation on the spot, employing every available means for an impartial and exact determination of the causes of the explosion. Its operations have been conducted with the utmost deliberation and judgment, and while independently pursued, no course of information was neglected and the fullest opportunity was allowed for a simultaneous investigation by the Spanish authorities.

Findings of the Court.

The finding of the court of inquiry was reached, after twenty-three days continuous labor, on the 21st day of March, and having been approved on the 22nd, by the commander-in-chief of the United States naval force on the North Atlantic station, was transmitted to the executive. It is herewith laid before congress together with the voluminous testimony taken before the court.

Its purport is in brief as follows: When the "Maine" arrived at Havana she was conducted by a regular government pilot to buoy No. 4, to which she was moored in five and half to six fathoms of water. The state of discipline on board and the condition of her magazines, boilers, coal bunkers and storage compartments, are passed in review, with the conclusion that excellent order prevailed and that no indication for any cause of an internal explosion existed in any quarter.

The Fatal Evening.

At 8 o'clock on the evening of February 15th, everything had been reported secure and all was quiet. At forty minutes past 9 o'clock the vessel was suddenly destroyed. There were two distinct explosions with a brief interval between them. It first lifted the forward part of the ship very perceptibly; the second, which was more prolonged, is attributed by the court to a partial explosion of two or more of the forward magazines. The evidence of the divers establishes that the afterpart of the ship was practically intact and sank in that condition a very few minutes after the explosion. The forward part was completely demolished. Upon the evidence, the concurrent finding of the court is as follows:

Injuries Sustained.

"At frame seventeen, the outer shell of the ship, from a point eleven and a half feet from the middle line of the ship and six feet above the keel when in its normal position, had been forced up so as to be now about four feet above the surface of the water; therefore, about thirty-four feet above where it would be had she sunk uninjured. The outside bottom plating is bent into a reversed "V" shape, the after wing of which, about fifteen feet broad and thirty-two feet in length (from frame 17 to frame 25) is doubled back upon itself against the continuation of the same plating extending forward. At frame eighteen the vertical keel is broken in two and the keel bent into an angle similar to the angle formed by the outside plates. This break is about six feet below the surface of the water and about thirty feet above its normal position. In the opinion of the court this effect could have been produced only by the explosion of a mine situated under the bottom of the ship, at about frame eighteen and somewhat on the port side of the ship."

Conclusions of the Court.

The conclusions of the court are: That the loss of the "Maine" was not

in any respect due to default or negligence on the part of any of the officers or members of her crew. That the ship was destroyed by an explosion of a submarine mine, which caused the partial explosion of two or more of her forward magazines; and that no evidence has been obtainable in fixing the responsibility for the destruction of the "Maine" upon any person or persons. I have directed the finding of the Court of Inquiry and views of this government thereon to be communicated to the government of her majesty, the Queen, and I do not permit myself to doubt that the sense of justice of the Spanish nation will dictate a course of action suggested by honor and the friendly relations between the two governments. It is the duty of the executive to advise Congress of the result and in the meantime a deliberate consideration is invoked.

(Signed) WILLIAM McKINLEY.
Executive Mansion March 28, 1897.

The partial loss of the grape crop this year, caused by the heavy rains, is estimated to exceed \$1,000,000. Farmers and vineyards all over the northern part of the State have suffered. While this is true, it is equally a fact that lost and falling strength may be restored by the persistent systematic use of the great rational tonic Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, which renews and tones the activity of the stomach, liver and the bowels, counteracts a tendency to rheumatism and kidney complaint, and prevents malarial disorders. After exhausting diseases have run their course, recovery is greatly accelerated by the use of the Bitters, which improves appetite and imparts renewed vigor to the debilitated physique.

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